



COUNTRY IMAGE MANAGEMENT – ELEMENT OF NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

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Abstract: *Post-industrial society is a “devalued” society, where great ideologies do not have a decisive impact on public area: they are no longer participating in the legitimacy of individuals, groups, organizations or states. The need for legitimacy cannot be satisfied even in science, since cultural relativism undermines the idea of “objective reality”, post-positivist epistemology defines knowledge as “social product”, and The Truth is deposed in public by the new purpose value: Consensus. Within this changed landscape, legitimacy is no longer built from top-to-bottom and once-for-all, but the other way round: from bottom-to-top and day-by-day. New kind of legitimacy has brought new strategies and objectives, and hence the legitimacy of new techniques, for which the central concept is Credibility and the main instrument is the Image. Therefore, legitimate statehood becomes the stake of a permanent, daily, and highly specialized activity - conceived, designed and built according to a new social engineering: Public Relations. For example to legitimize the existence within the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic area of a nation-state called Romania, with the current attributes of statehood - sovereignty, independence, unitary and indivisible character – is no longer a matter of ideology, but one of image. In a world where Wilson’s principle¹ stops functioning as instance of legitimacy, the national security strategy does not necessarily refer to doctrine field, but to that of Communication. It is an effective communication strategy, i.e. a PR campaign..*

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1. POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AS DEVALUED SOCIETY

Modernity was born along with the great ideologies, usually seen as alternatives to Christianity. (Touraine, 1996:3-18). But to Christianity, as a universalist religion, it could only be opposed a universalistic and comprehensive vision. Indeed, laic ideologies

offered *another* insight into the world and man's place in it, but had *the same* claim of universality; the proposed picture by them was as comprehensive and totalizing the *explains* the origins of the world and man, *describes* their evolution and *prescribed* rules of behavior to harmonize the man with the world.

That is why the great ideologies of modernity were eschatologies, too - this time, laic ones – being forced to postulate a *sense of history* without which it couldn't provide a *sense of life*. However, they have wanted to be "made", and in order to turn to reality they appealed to 'large format subjects', true heroes of world history. Therefore, Lyotard (1993) calls them “great stories”. All these "stories of legitimacy" (Lyotard, 1993:59-68) contain an ontology, a gnoseology and ethics; most contain a "sociology" and "political science",

¹ Woodrow Wilson’s Principle, of „national self-determination”, has been presented to the USA Congress on the 8th January, 1918, as a response to Lenin’s proposals of 22nd November, 1917 (peace "without annexations and indemnities"). Due to the Wilsonian project, between 1918-1920 they were able to complete the union of more nations, the Romanian nation being one of them. In the XXth century, „the national principle” functioned as court of legitimacy, contributing to the affirmation of nationalism as a „great legitimate nation” (Lyotard).

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and some also propose a "pedagogy". This exhaustive character made them part of the process of legitimacy in the same manner in which Christianity had done and tradition did in case of "closed societies" (Popper). This manner is called by Lyotard "legitimizing narrative". As participating in a tradition was sufficient to ensure social recognition before, reflected in the moral sense of "respectability", great ideologies have allowed continued *top-to-bottom* legitimacy; if before legitimizing presupposed the appeal to "tradition sky" (Habermas), now purpose values are used, being proposed by great ideologies. The fundamental function of "great stories" is the harmonization of the painting world with human life, rendering a meaning to both world history and human life. By this, they meet some basic necessities: of *unitary picture of the world*, of *emotional security*, of *devotion* and *sense of life*. Making reference to all elaborate systems", Erich Fromm wrote: "Whatever their content is, they all respond to the double human need to have a system to support thinking and an object of devotion to assure the significance of his existence and his situation in the world." (Fromm, 1993:93). One can argue that great ideologies have worked, until recently, as symbolic vaults for human communities, as whole societies. Thus, they took over from the Christianity and tradition, being the main sources of recognition and respectability, including self-recognition and self-respectability.

But the vault has a bivalent symbolic function: a) on the one hand, it provides a community the identity guidelines and ensures the coherence of social behavior; b) on the other hand, it creates a "greenhouse effect" that delays the community adaptation to changes in the environment. People renounce to the symbolic cornerstone when it becomes obvious that it no longer provides adaptation and thus, evolution, when they feel "suffocated". (See, for example, the case of collapsed communist ideology in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe). Sometimes the tension between objective headquarters of development and the symbolic

vault in force becomes evident later on; it is ideologically processed and attributed to other phenomena than the real ones. In such cases devastating conflicts arise and the symbolic vault collapses into the deafening noise of war – see the former Yugoslavia in the 90s.

2. INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF "GREAT STORIES" COLLAPSE

The end of great ideologies of modernity is not the result of the collapse of communist ideology as the dominant ideology, but on the contrary: anticommunist revolutions of 1989 represent the end point of last universalist ideology survival which claimed to act as symbolic vault for an entire society. What Francis Fukuyama tried to underline in the study "Is This the End of History?", first published in the summer issue of 1989 of "National Interest" U.S. magazine (1989), is only an unsuccessful attempt to replace communism with liberalism, as a last unique and symbolic vault, valid for all humanity in the globalization stage. Today, nobody believes in Fukuyama, for the decades that have elapsed since the publication of his controversial study, event-history prediction denied the prediction: "universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Rather, his forecast on survival in the short term, on nationalism and of Islam, on the long term, as an alternative to liberal democracy doctrine, was confirmed. (Fukuyama,1989:466). Here is a subject of meditation closely related to the topic of our work. The nationalisms explosion would equal that of great structures of world peace; the political and military powers fragmentation can also mean losing control of destructive forces on planetary range; the collapse of traditional economic structures can cause a *dangerous isolationism* and, therefore, can lead to the appearance of numerous "*fascism of helplessness*" that may generate whole new international conflicts, of widespread instability.

Out of such a bleak perspective, but not entirely unrealistic, the point that Allan Bloom

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drew attention to seemed interesting, being one of the most convincing critics of the idea of universalization of liberal democracy: “Nations of Africa and the Middle East which, for one reason or another, do not easily reach modernity, are tempted to find meaning and affirmation of identity in various forms of European nations cannot find a rational reason to exclude from their territories the numerous potential immigrants that return to their national myths. Even the American left side has enthusiastically embraced the fascist arguments against modernity and eurocentrism, being perceived as expressions of rationalism.”(Bloom, 1989:472). From the perspective of national security strategy it is important to understand whether the relapse from the “sky” off rationality and universality is an irreversible trend of human history or it will remain only a necessary step backwards in the more general trend of history universalization, “one step back” before “other three forward”, “a simple return to the point where the history universality was seized by great powers and forced to distortion through imperialist-like strategies. We must be also interested in ways and means to counterattack the possibility that a likely *omnes against omnis* war to degenerate into *Armageddon*, a final battle with no losers and no winners.

3. “SMALL STORIES” AND “BOTTOM-TO-UP”LEGITIMACY

The end of “great stories of legitimacy” is due, ultimately, to astonishing developments of advanced capitalist societies.” “Post-industrial society, or “neo-capitalism”, has abandoned hierarchical management mode, turning into a network of networks, an “anti-system based on autonomy of agents, on teamwork, on flexibility and communication. (Hauser & Michon, 2001: 15).

This new form of society is described by Pascal Michon: “The development of telecommunication technology, of information networks in real time, the globally interconnected world, but also at intermediate level, the development of democracy

represented in many countries as before and, finally, at regional level, business management development through meetings, of information circulation – all these developments have changed the ways of meaning and the way in which companies produce their own sense” (2001: 15).

The new way to produce meaning is easily described by the term “small story”. People still need a *story* and in the absence of “great stories” they resort to substitutes of great ideologies, i.e. replacing the theory with “genres such as ethnography, narrative journalist, humorous comic book, documentary and, especially, the novel”. (Rorty, 1998:30).

A true priest of the “post-metaphysical culture” which he considers “not less possible than a post-religious one and as desirable” (1998:29). Richard Rorty theorizes the “historicist turn” whose essence would reside in replacing Truth with Freedom. Truth becomes a private value, as Belief at the beginning of secularization of modern societies, and the search for truth – a strictly personal matter, as seeking God, that is, a matter of “self creation” and “private perfection”. In public places we cannot legitimize through appeal to Truth, because today it became clear that self creation and justice, private perfection and human solidarity cannot be consolidated into a single vision: “There is no way that self creation can be reunited with justice, at the theory level. The self creation vocabulary is a private one by all means, being unshared, unsuitable for any argumentation. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily a public, shared one, an environment good for argumentative exchanges” (1998:27)

We’ve considered this point of view not so much for its philosophical significance, but for its social relevance; the fact that Rorty was one of the most popular American philosophers is explained by the coincidence of his ideas and the obsession of North American society with *Consensus*. The “neo-capitalist” society orientation from Truth to Consensus is interpreted by Rorty as a general

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turning “against theory and towards narrative”. Therefore, “the novel, film and TV program have replaced gradually but firmly, the preaching and the treaty as main means of moral change and progress”. (Rorty, 1998:30)

On the other side of the Ocean, Gilles Lipovetsky (1996) remarks the same distancing of contemporary society from truth and from the theoretical explanation, in favor of consensus and intuitive image. In *Twilight of debt*, Lipovetsky speaks of post-Kantian ethics specific to a post moralist society: “post moralist culture expanded the range of options and possible lifestyles, coerced conformity to step back from the invention of individualistic self: we do not believe in the dream of 'changing life', there is only the sovereign individual concerned with the management of life quality. (...) The hyper liberal phase is coming to an end, ultra rigorism has no legitimacy; this is the new cultural configuration of our time, that combines the requirements of private autonomous with those of a *clean* public place. The post moralist era is no more transgressive, nor Puritan, it is *correct*.” (Lipovetsky, 1996:86-89).

In this new socio-cultural context, strategies of legitimacy in the public space radically change. We cannot legitimize claiming us from a great ideology, and even from certain moral principles. But, if moral values cease to be values of *finality*, they become values of *yield*. Lipovetsky speaks of “operational utilitarian morality”, which is illustrated best by the new communication strategy of enterprises. Here's how he describes this great shift in the mechanisms of legitimating: “Although free enterprise becomes the unsurpassable horizon of the economy, it is forced to define and create its own criteria of legitimacy; the era when the great enterprise could be considered a pure trader has passed; it no longer limited to merely sell products, but it must manage public relations, to conquer and to promote their institutional legitimacy. (...) Now, the legitimacy of the enterprise is no longer given or challenged, it is *built* and sold, we live in the era of values marketing and promotional

legitimacies, the last stage of post moralist secularization.” (Lipovetsky, 1996:291-292).

4. COUNTRY IMAGE AS A LEGITIMACY TOOL

In the context of contemporary societies, secular and “devalued”, we witness the end of the trend noticed by Jurgen Habermas (1983) related to the transition from traditional to modern society: “Capitalism (...) gives a legitimacy to domination that does not descend from the heaven of cultural tradition, but that can be based on social work. Market Institution (...) corresponds to justice equivalence of exchange relations. With this category of reciprocity, bourgeois ideology is itself a standing point of legitimacy, out of a report specific to communicative action. But here the principle of reciprocity is the very principle of social organization of production and reproduction processes. Therefore, political power can now be legitimized 'down', not 'up' (through appeal to cultural tradition).” (Habermas, 1983:159-160) In other words, legitimacy occurs not through teleonomic values or, as Jean Piaget calls them, “values of finality” (Piaget, 1967:44) inoculated into the social body through the great ideologies, but through *yield values*, which are presented and perceived as *values of finality*. Thus, *Propaganda* is replaced by *Advertising*. There is no question of *promoting* a set of values of finality, but to *transform* yield values into values of finality.

Our thesis sustains that today, replacing legitimacy “*top-to-bottom*” with “*bottom-to-top*” one has been generalized, going beyond the nation-state boundaries and bursting into the international relations. Individuals, organizations and states legitimize themselves through the *management of their own self-image* (euphemistic phrase, where the true content of this activity is distorted: *the management of social representations*). To serve this task, a whole system of social engineering was born, with all the technology related to it: *Public Relations*. An extensive literature talks about the evolution of

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techniques for managing social representations.

Many of these techniques could be undertaken effectively in the Romanian national security strategy.

The lack of a strategy of managing the country image does not mean that Romania doesn't have an image outside; it has *several images*, in different socio-historical areas. But spontaneous image of a subject, comprising "natural way" is influenced by many factors beyond the subjects' control. It is exactly what happens to the image of Romania, in which the imagological viewpoint indicators develop as weeds, serving the country's development objectives on the medium and long term and through it, sabotaging the *national security policy*.

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